

Bits and Pieces -

jotted down by

Raymond Atakeen,

primarily for himself and any-
one else who may wish to read
over his shoulder, as a summer's
drive through the English,
Welsh and Scottish countryside
is recalled. July, 1971

BELL RINGING BECOMES HIM

There are four of us making the trip. Two-of-us have known each other for over thirty-eight years. Three-of-us—that is the two-of-us already mentioned and the third now being introduced—have known one another for over sixteen years. Now the fourth one . . . well, he's only been known to the three-of-us since November of two years ago. But we shan't call him a Johnny-come-lately. (In the first place his name isn't Johnny; in the second place he has the air of a chap who knows his way around!) And that, kind reader, is one of the reasons why there are four-of-us and not three-of-us. He's been to Europe almost summer after summer, and this eminently qualifies him to become our driver and chief guide. His prior experience has taught him the highly desired virtue of "preparedness." Nonetheless, we in all honesty must admit that we were quite unprepared for how prepared he was!

We found out in short order. Great scott! Before we were even aboard BOAC's VC-10 Super London-bound airliner . . . before we even got on the mobile lounge at Dulles International Airport . . . we were given to understand how well his Boy Scout training was paying off. It all was made known to us—and one may also add to the hundreds who were coming and going at Dulles who happened to be within earshot. For suddenly, without any prior warning whatsoever, there was the ringing of bells, and the buzzing of buzzers . . . and had there been whistles, there would have been the whistling of whistles: the cavernous reaches of the terminal echoed and echoed. And those particularly alerted by such noises were manning their stations! What happened? Dear reader, I'm glad you asked. You are entitled to know, and I want so very, very much to tell you.

As I live and breathe, this is a bona-fide account although the Dulles authorities would hardly have recorded it this way in their triplicate upon triplicate sheaf of documents. But I was there, and so were a good many other people: all honest and of high moral fibre who could attest to this accounting.

Back again, please, to that aforementioned who made a foursome out of a threesome. Just as he crossed through the electronic detecting columns (the mechanical procedure by which officials ferret out as best they can possible armed hi-jackers) the silence was broken. He simply set the device off. That's what he did alright. And, as I understand it (I can only tell you as I understand it), the device just doesn't go off unless . . . unless. That's right, unless there's something highly-suspect being concealed— that's the word—concealed.

Mark you, he's as innocent looking as they come. He has what could be described as a near-cherubic countenance. The officials, true to their calling (his apparent guileless appearance notwithstanding, and our embarrassment showing) quickly move in. There's a suspect before their very eyes, and he's got to be guilty according to their code (is that the way it's put, marshall?) until he's proven innocent.

What triggered the electronic detecting mechanism? And where is it?

In no time at all the concealed is revealed: a steak knife! What now! In the name of an-all-expenses-fully-paid-in-advance-tour, what would a traveler be doing with a steak knife—a steak knife of all things?!

The innocent looking one, with that near-cherubic-face is not at loss for an explanation: one of the fringe benefits of innocence: there's always a reason . . . an explanation. He has his. And they believe him: he's simply taking it along in case his little group of four in their hired car decide one day to picnic along the countryside: and what could be handier, thinks he, than to have a sharp-edged knife readily available . . . cheese to cut, bread to cut—(did he not remember how the rolls would be so hard-cruste?) . . . fruit to peel. They believe him—with the steak knife in their possession—they can easily afford to believe him! So he succeeds in boarding the mobile lounge . . . sans knife. He and it are happily rejoined once London's Heathrow airport is reached.

Thousands left for London that night from airports all over the world. It might not be too much to believe that the four-of-us-from-Silver-Spring were the only ones to leave with bells ringing!

GRACIOUS GESTURE

No matter how seasoned the traveler, there remains an element of unexplainable tension until the checking-in counter at the air terminal is left safely behind. The possibility of error, previously undetected, could inevitably come to light here. So one waits as the line is formed. Finally, it's your turn (why, why do all the others have to take so long?)

The polite chap with the neat uniform of his greatly esteemed air line (he's trying so carefully to completely conceal his authoritarian role) nods approvingly as he returns all necessary tickets, tags, etc.

So you turn to go away . . . so far so good. But wait: he calls you by name, adding his "one moment, please." It's polite alright, and very official, too.

He disappears once he has you stayed in your steps. He re-appears. What now could be in the formal envelope he bears? You reach for it. You open it anxiously, hurriedly. The message reads: "Happy Landing." It's from three good and grand parishioners whose gracious gesture comes as a benediction at journey's start.

RUSSELL SQUARE IN THE MORNING

The years pass quickly. It was my first introduction to London—some twenty-five summers have well-nigh run their course since that initial visit to Russell Square. Little has changed. The buildings are much the same except for the major restoration work being done on the Hotel Russell and the new office structure going up in the distance. How do I know? There's the hammer-head crane raising its "progress" insignia so proudly over all it surveys.

Just for old times sake, I go back to the British Museum by way of 15 (is that the number?) Bedford Place where we lived for two weeks and more. The bombed out areas, in that particular section, so vividly recalled, have long since disappeared.

As always, my interest is in people. Let me tell you about three of them.

First there is Carodoc Islwyn Thomas. He is Welsh, and comes, so he tells me (and why shouldn't I believe him?) from the well-known Lewis family. They are noted, his word for it, for their singing and their boxing. I don't know who the others are in his family who have gone on to fame and distinction, but he, bless his noble soul, is an ordinary chap, a very ordinary chap, who impresses me as one who has extraordinary pride in a simple daily chore. He's retained by the London County Council as a bollard cleaner. Bollards are the porcelain type directional standards which are found at street intersections. About 30 inches high and 12 or more inches square, they are white and yellow with blue arrows. At night they are illuminated. He cleans, scours, and polishes them. It takes him about two weeks to cover his territory. With cart in tow, he has all his necessary equipment within reach including the bucket of detergent-treated water which he insists that I examine. Then he goes on to tell me once more of his particular cleaning technique. No composer putting aside a score, no architect unfolding a series of expertly prepared drawings, no preacher leaving the sacred desk—none of these could turn aside from the day's work with greater pride than ruddy-complexioned, blue-garbed and capped Carodoc Islwyn Thomas, bollard cleaner!

Turning to leave, he calls to me. It's the happy thought—he has kinfolk who live in Ohio. Since I come from the States, it occurred to him that maybe I would know them!

* * *

Then there's the *college student, happy wanderer*. He wears a broad smile, easily discerned despite his heavy beard. With pack-on-back, covered with something a brilliant red, he's on his way a-foot throughout England and the continent. Hailing from Canada's well-known McGill University, where he chose to go to college, he'll do a two year stint of alternate service (his draft number has been called and he has registered as a conscientious objector) in the new Medical Center, Burlington, Vermont. My brief encounter leads me to remember him as idealistic and concerned; self-sufficient and quite comfortable with himself.

* * *

The third character: *Englishman on a park bench*. Apparently, he's checking some important papers as he repeatedly places and replaces folder after folder in his brief-case. Is he waiting for someone? Not sure. Can't say. Whiling away moments in this fashion amid the beauty of the garden? Perhaps. As I look over the fence beyond him, his eyes meet mine as together we look at the passing omnipresent tour coach, loaded with tourists. It's the peak-season for them. He refers to them as the 'herded ones.' And he says they look so blank-faced, so bored. "They seldom smile," says he.

I walk away, thinking that in a number of cases he's quite right: "they never smile." There are reasons why this is so, of course, there are reasons. And I think I know some of them . . . but I'm not going to tell you . . . here and now . . . what I think some of those reasons are. No, I won't. You're guessing at some of them—you think you know what I'm thinking—don't you? And I dare say—you could be right - - -

FRUSTRATION

The very able tour director, who had arranged our go-it-yourself-itinerary, had assured us that the rented car (the descriptive booklet put it: Vauxhall Victor 2000, fully automatic) would be delivered to the Hotel President by ten in the morning. We believe him.

Once a half-hour passes beyond the stipulated time, our American impatience overtakes us. To the phone booth, only to learn that the voice at the other end of the line reports in calm and measured tones, "We regretfully advise that we are grossly understaffed today." Would we, suggest they, kindly take a cab (for which they assure us we would be respectfully re-imbursed) to their office. There the car will be waiting for us. We believe them.

Arriving at their place of business, bedlam reigns. It's the peak tourist season. There must be at least six on the staff, rushing hither and yon, answering telephone calls and filling-in-forms at the same time, beckoning to this person and to that one. In the background there is the poor benighted tourist whose wife can't master the art of right-hand-driving, who stalls in traffic, who has had the car less than fifteen minutes away from the terminal and is back already with at least two side-swipes to her credit!

Eventually, we succeed in supplying all the desired information regarding our previously-arranged-for (How did the fancy folder describe it: Vauxhall Victor 2000, fully automatic). As the signature is affixed, we quite casually ask: "How long until we get the car?" The answer is given very, very honestly. In fact far more honestly than we realized at the moment. The answer: "Don't know." Just like that—"Don't know." Very, very honest folks, by Jove!

Quite accidentally, we turn back only to overhear a conversation: they are trying to get us a car—Vauxhall Victor 2000 fully automatic—from London's Heathrow airport . . . which is miles away. They have no car suitable to our needs at hand.

We've given them our hotel telephone number. Nothing left now to do but go back and wait.

At the nearest telephone booth we decide to put a call through to our efficient tour consultant. Surely, he'll get action for us once we've informed him of our situation. But it's Saturday afternoon, and his office is closed. He did say that he would be at our beck and call, night or day. His home phone? Alas, in our excitement, we neglected to get it. We do remember that he lives "18 miles out in the country," but the telephone operator advises that she just can't help us if we don't know the name of the town or sub-division.

Having trudged our way back, we wait and wait at the hotel. The hours drag on, and our initial allure of a busy hotel lobby has long since faded.

The car is now promised, we are told, by three o'clock. We believe them.

The car arrives with fully automatic transmission and fully-apologetic driver at 4:30 p.m.—six and one-half hours after the initially agreed upon time. The driver says he was caught in a traffic jam. Do you think we believe him? It's your turn, dear reader, to be frustrated since the fourth member of the quartet says "yes, I believe him."

FRUSTRATION REPEATED

The agreement with the car rental people calls for a pilot driver to get us out of London . . . to get us on our way to Canterbury. After all, London is quite a place with some 13,000,000 people in and out on any given day.

The pilot driver is to come by ten o'clock in the morning. Do we believe this? Of course, we do. We believe

at 9:00	at 9:39
at 9:10½	at 9:42
at 9:18	at 9:59½

and at 10:00 o'clock we believe he will show up at any split second. We even go on believing in his imminent arrival at 10:30. Do we believe it at 10:31? Absolutely no! What to do now? Brave it on your own—and we do. Not a bad way to handle frustration, really—granted one doesn't waste energy regretting that such direct and independent action hadn't been taken earlier!

FRUSTRATION: FORGIVEN — FORGOTTEN

Weeks later when we meet again, the car rental man is greatly apologetic. One of us assures him that all is forgiven, and we hope the Lord will be as merciful with us as we have been with him. And why not? Why shouldn't we be understanding? It's the peak of the tourist season, really. We are not the only ones wanting a car—a Vauxhall Victor 2000, fully automatic, no less. And after all, they were understaffed: sickness, inefficient help and all that; there were those awful phones ringing and customers breathing down their back. There was that poor bewildered female, wrestling unsuccessfully with the blasted right-hand drive (why must the British be so different?) and stick transmission. And don't forget those two side-swipes in less than fifteen minutes out there in that merciless sea swamped by all those other careless drivers. Somebody had to pay attention to her. Surely, she wasn't getting much comfort from that husband of hers who, biting his nails, probably had fought the whole idea from the very beginning . . .

FRUSTRATION'S REWARD

Second day out as we check into our hotel, each of us finds a basket of fruit. The London-based tour agent had learned of the "unfortunate car rental incident" and he is handsomely apologetic. The sweet smelling aroma of the refreshing fruit becomes his apt "Sorry about that, madam!" Furthermore, at tour's end he arranges for us to keep the car an extra day at no added cost. To top all this, he guarantees a generous arrangement when we contract another car when we unexpectedly extend our days in the country.

Kind reader, life is frustration. Crossing the Atlantic doesn't guarantee a thing in this regard. How to handle frustration: hope for a happy ending. If you're a tourist, be sure you have a compassionately capable agent, a calm and unperturbed driver, a corps of compatible companions, a time margin that lends itself to the unexpected . . .

SMALL WORLD

It happens eventually. Winifred is standing at the north entrance to Canterbury Cathedral. She turns. Directly in front of her, unheralded and at that moment unexplained, is Jean Stellihorn. She's waiting for Art, who is still in the cathedral. He is not about to leave until he has paid full homage at the tomb of Thomas Beckett.

Thousands of miles from home—preacher and parishioner meet. What better place in which to have the preacher find his parishioner? Better still, perhaps, in what better place to have the parishioner find his preacher? Worked out well for both, one could say . . .

* * *

The London Times, said to be one of the finest newspapers in the English-speaking world, was frequently read on our trip. There was one day (July 23 in fact) when the by-line from a Washington dispatched article carried the name of Saul Kohler. He's an able newspaperman, whose mother in her lingering illness has frequently been in my prayers . . . to say nothing of Saul whose devotion to her has been exemplary. Saul is the husband of our Saint Luke "Skip" Kohler. Small world, indeed.

* * *

Small world? Of course . . . up to the last minute there's always the chance meeting—thousands upon thousands of miles away from metropolitan Washington.

In crowded London's Heathrow Airport T.W.A. flight for New York is being called—and who are caught up in the homeward bound ones? The folks who sit in the fourth seat from the back on the Highland Drive side of Saint Luke Nave Sunday by Sunday . . . the Bethesda based Earl and Helen Stetler!



MEMORIES OF CANTERBURY

There are cloistered areas. There are steps made smooth by the sandalled feet of pilgrims in other years. Who walks today where they walked, walks with bowed head and silently so. His lips unmoved, he has only the conversation of the soul. No words are necessary as the devout ones commune with saint and sinner alike who came Canterbury way in years long passed.

* * *

The Bishop's Garden is lovely: a thousand times and more it is said just that way in a week's time. We are word-poor in the presence of beauty. There are roses, delphinium, nasturtium. Were there zinnias and dahlias, also? The one-time editor of the Hillandale Horticultural Journal calls our attention to the fragrance of the Linden tree.

* * *

Choir boys, collars askew, trot along awkwardly. They could be late for rehearsal prior to evensong. Already, as they dash by us, we hear the voices of others. The soft-soprano tones fell gracefully from the stone-arched windows above us. Bless the tardy ones—they'll still find time to straighten their halos ere the procession is formed. The angelic look has its own way of re-appearing . . .

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The organist fingers the key board and his feet master the pedals. The result: an artist (gifted, skilled, disciplined) by his superb manner translates the music of his soul through the mightiest and most magnificent instruments of praise known to the mind of man. We are forthrightly ushered into God's presence. That's what a prelude is for. Poor indeed is any worshipper who doesn't see it that way. Poor indeed is any church who may be denied these highly desirable and quite necessary minutes near the beginning hour of formal worship. Don't ask me who played that day—or what—in Canterbury. I only know that I listened. I heard. I was moved to silence and my soul was made ready . . .

* * *



371.—St. Augustine's Gate, Canterbury.

It came time for the preacher to preach.

He did.

He preached from a high pulpit.

He preached down to us.

He preached over our heads.

He preached as though he didn't much care whether
we listened or not.

Don't ask me who he was or what he said.

I only know the preacher preached.

I wish he hadn't.

* * *

Leaving Canterbury, I turned for a backward look. There stood the cathedral, timeless and majestic. The cathedral preached. I'm glad it did. God spoke to me through those stones, honestly He did. Maybe one day in a more charitable mood I'll be able to say that God spoke through that preacher-in-the-pulpit. I thought his heart was as cold as stone while he preached. With God it could be that one stone isn't much different than another: a stone is a stone is a stone. So if God can speak through one stone, He ought to be able to speak through any stone. Now what will you make of that? Go ahead and rebuke me—rebuke all of us preachers. We're said to be notoriously poor listeners to other men's preaching! Don't you believe it . . . and go easy on that rebuke. Winifred, Ethel and Robert didn't get much out of that sermon that day either. Go ahead ask them then for yourself—get any one of them to tell you the preacher's text . . . what he said. So there . . .

LONG TIME

The Mermaid Inn, whose cuisine far exceeded that of any other place where we ate, is a quaint spot in the ancient town of Rye. It goes back to 1420. That's a long time.

ANCIENT CITY OF RYE

It's the church, I tell you, that dominates the place. It's called "The Parish Church of Saint Mary The Virgin, Rye, Sussex." It goes back to 1120 A.D., when the chancel, the oldest portion of the church was erected. It took more than 250 years to finally complete the structure. Sadly enough, in 1377 it suffered great misfortune. The town was looted by French invaders and the church damaged extensively. The tower collapsed. Much of the roof fell in. The bells were carried off to France. Human nature being what it is, and man geared to a tit-for-tatethic, you can readily understand how the following year the men of Rye and Winchelsea sailed to France, set fire to two French towns, recovered much of their property, including the church bells!

* * *

The clock, one can hear its ticking in the interior of the church while the long, gaunt exposed pendulum swings in full view of the worshipper. No doubt it's desirable that the worshipper whose soul is nurtured on eternity should be made conscious of the passing of time with the unceasing tick and equally unceasing tock! Small wonder that an inscription is to be found on one of the columns of the church stating: "Time consecrates, and what is grey with age becomes religion."

Inspired, presumably by such thoughts, a Rector of the parish once wrote these words which are now framed and appear on a pillar:

"Were we but more attuned to the soul of Time, we might interpret what Ruskin held to be the chief glory of a church—'that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval and condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity' . . . "

* * *

For anyone who's so interested: the clock in the church at Rye is probably the oldest church turret clock in the country still functioning with its original works. It was

made by Lewys Billiard of Winchelsea in 1560. So I've been told. I take their word for it.

* * *

The old church has had at least two distinctive chapel areas. The south, a Saint Nicholas Chapel, was long used as a school room for the poor. Now that sounds exemplary, doesn't it? Sure makes the church relevant, wouldn't you say? And who thought relevance or the lack of it, was something that only the modern generation had thought up?

Now the North Chapel, dedicated to St. Claire, was something else. It's fate was decried by a visitor who recorded his displeasure at the state of the chapel in these words: "It is impossible to speak too severely of the present state of this beautiful chapel, desecrated, neglected, damp and filled with ladders and fire engines." He went on to say that "When I last saw this originally beautiful adjunct of the venerable church, I saw therein a pillory and a "ducking stool," which latter shows that the good wives of Rye in the days of yore made wry faces and were rather addicted to scolding and occasionally required a "ducking in the river" . . . Who knows, good reader, but what there are those who will herald such use of the chapel—a storage area for ladders, fire engines and ducking stools to say nothing of the pillory—as being likewise relevant? Now ponder a bit about that, will you.

* * *

The memory of the good church at Rye remains, even as the church, experiencing good fortune and bad through the years, remains. Could this be the happy thought that one day prompted some sensitive soul to write:

“Upon the wreckage of thy yesterday
design the structure of tomorrow.

Lay strong corner stones of purpose
and prepare

Great blocks of wisdom, cut from
past despair,

Shape mighty pillars of resolve to set
Deep in the tear-wet mortar of regret.

Work on with patience, though thy
toll be slow.
Yet day by day thy edifice shall grow.
Believe in God—in thine own self believe,
All that thou desirest thou shalt achieve."

* * *

In the nave of the old church at Rye there is a special seat up front. It is handsomely designated as the place for the Mayor of Rye. Evidently, he was expected to attend, and his absence, like his presence, could be readily noted . . .



TURKISH TOWEL CABANA

I've always known them to be an ingenious people, these English, and practical too. Strolling along the beach at Brighton, popular holiday resort area, we saw any number of people—both sexes—changing from street clothes to swim outfits and vice versa . . . as they stood on the crowded beach. It was all done so expertly, easily, modestly. Seemingly anyone could qualify as a quick-change artist here, granted he has the invaluable aid of a towel; preferably, a large towel.

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL

No cathedral in England has a lovelier setting. Its superb spire rises for a height of 404 feet, tallest in all the land. There is a surrounding blanket of green grass, symbolic of the peaceful countryside.

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Few, if any events, of historical significance have been associated with this Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Yet, interestingly enough, no cathedral has a more apt religious history. The record for it: the district round about Salisbury has been a centre of religious worship for over 3,500 years. Stonehenge, you see, is but ten miles to the north of the city. There a temple has stood since about 1,800 B.C.

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Cathedrals, like the God they represent, could always use more of the people's money. Men and their committees devise and design clever ways to assist God in getting some portion. In Salisbury, for a small sum, the visitor can affix his name on an oakentimber. It will constitute a beam, once put in place to stand for 200 years. So men sign their names. The cathedral gets a sum and the vanity of man is served at one and the same time. Quite a bargain. Caution, friend: he who thinks and writes such thoughts, even as he who read and agrees, could become cynical. And there are few sins, if any, worse than that!



SALISBURY'S OLD CLOCK

It's a bold statement: "this clock is the oldest existing clock in England and almost certainly the earliest remaining mechanical clock in virtually complete and working condition in the world." Who cares to check it out? It was made nearly 600 years ago and struck the hours repeatedly for 498 of those 600 years. There was an interim period of 72 years when it was re-located and left in a tower unnoticed.

Now back in full swing, it's been estimated that it must have ticked (or tocked, according to your preference) more than 500 million times. Some quiet day when time lags for you, sit under a ticking (or tocking) clock and do your share of counting for a couple of hours or so. Translate your figures into days, weeks, months, years and centuries and see what estimate you come up with for a clock like the one in Salisbury Cathedral. For you, kind reader, this may seem like a most unproductive way to spend time. For some few I know it would be far better indeed than to do what they'll probably be doing ere the sun sets or a new day dawns . . .

SPEAKING OF CLOCKS . . .

Here's a little piece that came to my attention some time ago. Its message is crystal clear. Haven't personally checked out the arithmetic. Don't intend to, either. I'd lose a tick or a tock or so in the process!

—there is a story of a philosophical clock which fell to meditating upon its future as it was put in its place for the first time. It reasoned that it had to tick twice each second, 120 times each minute, 7,200 times every hour, in 24 hours it would tick 172,800 ticks. This meant 63,072,000 times every year calculated the clock. And in ten years it would have to tick 630,720,000 times. At this point it collapsed from nervous exhaustion. When it revived, it saw in a moment of insight that all it had to do was one tick at a time. So it began, and now, after a hundred years, it still is a respected grandfather's clock.



6.—Stonehenge.

STONEHENGE

How, when, where it was built, these questions, covering a period of history going back to 2200 B.C., have been answered. But *why* was it built? That's yet to be answered. And that's about par for man's course through life—it's the *why? why? why?* of things that haunts us to the day we die!

"TIMES HAVE CAUGHT UP WITH US"

The good Rector of Bigbury Parish wrote in his notes for July 1971 issue of the Woodleigh Deanery magazine:

"As we say good-bye to Constable Lee, his wife and family, we say good-bye to our last village policeman. It is sad to record, but times have caught up with us. We can no longer have our own 'bobby.' It is nearly as bad as losing the local doctor. Things will never be the same again. The personal relationship—the personal interest—is gone. We might have called the local 'bobby' by his Christian name, but he kept us all in order just the same. Why? Because he was such a good friend. If a local youngster ever gave trouble, the village constable called at the home and dealt with it on the spot. Whether he always reported to his senior officers, I wouldn't know. But I have known local policemen do some very good work amongst potential delinquents in parishes where I have lived. It was often work on a person-to-person basis because the people of the community meant so much to him and he meant so much to the community. They were all part of it. Now that is to change. I understand there will be a resident constable in Modbury for the time being. Otherwise our nearest police officer is at Kingbridge. I suppose the Kingbridge police are as good as any in the land—but Kingbridge seems an awful long way away. What is worse, we can't get to know them so well, nor they us. On the other hand, it might be a comfort to know there is a policeman at the end of the telephone for 24 hours of every day. So, although it is with sadness, it is not with despair, that we wish Bill and his wife and sons every success in Crediton, with much happiness in the future. With them they take our heartfelt thanks for all they, and their predecessors, have done for the peace and welfare of the people of Bigbury."

BOY SAINT

Fourteen is a tender age in which to die. That's how old a lad by the name of Pancras was when for Christ's sake he became a martyr during the Diocletian persecution. Christian Romans, in the fourth century, built a church in ancient Exeter and named it for him. The name continues to be associated with a church, built perhaps in the twelfth century, that still stands on the site of the little British town which existed when the Romans came.

CLOCK IN EXETER CATHEDRAL

The motto reads as follows: "The days pass
and are reckoned to our account."



460—Exeter Cathedral.

LIKE A FOREST IN SPRING

Exeter Cathedral, so it's been said, has the longest unbroken stretch of Gothic vaulting in the world—more than 300 feet in length—and probably the finest example of its kind in existence. A former dean once said, as he presumably recalled the general effect of the vaulting as high palm trees—that when one comes upon it on a day when the sun is shining through the windows that it's like a forest in the spring time.

SURPRISE

Barefoot, long-haired, clad in jeans, fair faced and smiling . . . I learned that she's from a New Jersey town, a senior in high school, in Exeter for the summer. Doing what? Digging amid the ruins of an excavation site for a modern-day office building to be erected hard-by the cathedral. She and her kind while away the hours, day after day, week after week, until summer's close, looking for remnants of an ancient civilization. Little modern miss, I misjudged you. Thank you. You're a surprise item and a boon to my spirits.

SOUND PHILOSOPHY

Thurlestone is by the sea. One would expect to meet sturdy souls here. Albert Edward Coward is one of them. I came upon him as I walked the village lane to the post office. Beyond 70, he remains quite active. He does gardening and is a cleaner at the local school, despite the fact he's more than reached retirement age. He and his wife have lived here for more than 30 years. He walks practically everywhere; refusing to take a carriage, as he puts it. His reddish complexion and furrowed brow attest to the honesty of his words. Every Sunday he and his wife walk the distant miles to the home of his mother-in-law. Asked about the weather, he sagely replied: "We learn to adjust to the elements."

BY THE GENTLE PRESSURE OF THE HAND

Then there was that other precious soul I met near the Old Rectory Garden in Thurlestone. But first about the garden. Little did I realize at the time, although I might have surmised it, we've seen none lovelier the month's long stay in England, Scotland and Wales. It's immaculately kept by a gardener or two and the present landowner himself. It defies description. Like one trying to explain beauty or love—they are known only as they are experienced. Could it be that it is as lovely as it is because the landowner himself stoops to weed, to spray, to rake, to prune? That his enthusiasm, yes even reverence, inspires the hired ones?

But back to that precious soul near the garden gate. He's in his seventies, as was the other gentleman I met. Six years back he suffered a coronary or so. To this village he and his mate of four decades and more have come to live. He's on his way now to the village pub for his daily pint. He pauses long enough to speak of other things . . . like the fact that almost daily, he and "the Mrs." come to the garden and sit on "yonder bench" between five and seven. The hour or two passes as they sit—"never so much as a word between us;" he says, "occasionally perhaps there is the gentle pressure of the hand . . ."

THE RAIN MAKER

For at least a hundred years and more, there have been variations on this rhyme in Britain:

"Saint Swithin's Day, if thou dost rain,
For forty days it will remain;
Saint Swithin's Day, if thou be fair,
For forty days 'twill rain na mair."

It's a fiction, of course. But what are the facts behind it? Well, it's been said that you can trace it all back to a Bishop of Winchester, Swithin by name. Bless his soul, when he died, as he did in the year 862, it was remembered that he had directed that he be buried outside the Cathedral Church, in a humble position where the feet of the worshipper could tread upon his grave. To the credit of those who mourned his passing, his instructions were carried out. The years passed. There came a day when the humble soul was canonized. Certain monks, devoutly moved, decided to exhume his remains and bury them in a more honorable position within the chancel or choir area. The work was begun on July 15, but it rained so heavily that it could not be completed. The rain continued for forty days. What now did the monks make of this? They presumed that the saint, according to legend, was exhibiting his displeasure at the disregard of his wishes. However, after some strange misadventures, the body was laid to rest in a shrine within the cathedral.

What a pity that the legend (the fiction of the saint) is remembered and that the fact of the man, whose life was rooted in common sense and based upon a humble appreciation of the real nature of God, should so easily be forgotten.

SAINT SWITHIN'S DAY

It's eight in the morning. The bell continues to ring, thanks to the vigorous rope-pulling of the vicar who arrived only a few minutes before, cassock-garbed on his bicycle. To the altar in the Lady Chapel of Thurlestone's All Saints' Church he goes to conduct half-hour services of Holy Communion on this Saint's day. Four of us are here . . . the vicar and three others.

Kneeling before that altar in that old church (it goes back to the 12th century), God came to us anew as we realized the sacred elements.

Since every man is a warrior-of-sorts, there was fresh appreciation for the wording on the commemorative tablet on the church wall: "Here the Royal Marines waited upon the Lord and renewed their strength during the years 1939-1945." (Thurlestone served as a training base for the Royal Marines during that time.)

HONESTY BECOMES THE CHURCH

A short guide, descriptive of All Saints' Church, Thurlestone, includes this statement: "On the organ casing are a number of ancient wood-carvings of events in the life of Christ. These are reputed to have been looted from some church in Flanders during one of the many wars in the Low Countries . . ." An honest statement, no doubt. But in this case, is honesty enough? Dare one hope for something more to have been said? to have been done?

POIGNANTLY PUT

Gravestone inscription, found in church yard at Thurlestone, marks the burial spot of Mary Steurt Bevell who died at age 21 . . .

"One more has gone where all is bliss
Where pain is never known
But all is peace and holiness
Before the savior's throne.

And yet she lay so near our heart
Our love so firmly won
We scarce could bear to see her part
And say "Thy will be done'."

And this, too, is honesty that becomes the believer. In this case it is quite enough, really; quite enough: the honest appraisal of one's sorrow and the absolute necessity for submission and surrender.

GOOD MAN

At the entrance beneath the Tower of the old church in Thurlestone there is a tablet, placed quite appropriately in the wall where every worshipper may read as he nears the door to that place of worship. It was put there over 300 years ago (1614) in tribute to some good man whose name is not given.

"In welthe not riche
Yet riche in true content;
On riche and poore his
Means he largely spent
Loving beloved a friend to
Neighbors all. No gaine
could turne his honey
into gall."

QUESTION

At Mortonhampstead we stay in the magnificent Tudor manor house. It is now owned by the British Transport Hotels. Once it belonged to Lord Hamilton. The garageman told us that "he owned all the land thereabout, including a village; he owned it all, as far as the eye could see." Wonder how it feels to own so much? Wonder what it does to a man's ego? to a man's soul? Wasn't there once a person who received a request for prayer for a certain man "who is becoming rich." Odd, really, odd. So often we pray for the poor; so seldom we pray for the rich!

CAUSE TO PONDER

Before leaving Mortonhampstead we drive the short distance down the narrow hedged country lane to the tiny village of North Bovey. Some few houses surround the village green with its pump encircled by trees. The old church is in excellent shape. Its interior is spotless. They tell us it has a wealthy patron. I am glad because I like well-kept churches, clean, revered. But as I walk away I have other thoughts . . . and I'm not at all comfortable with them: why was the money given? was it given at someone else's expense? does the patron look upon this holy spot as a private door to heaven? I don't like to think such thoughts. Wealthy patron, whoever you are, wherever you are, forgive me! These are not questions for me to answer nor to ask. They're yours.

THIS STRANGE CREATION

The editor of Chagford's Saint Michael's Parish Magazine (July 1971) included this arrenting item:

"How the world is made up. If we look at the world as if it were a village, with a population of one thousand people, the following interesting facts emerge: 140 of them would be Americans (60 from the U.S.A.; 80 from South America); 210 would come from Europe; 86 from Africa, and 565 from Asia; 700 people would have skins of other shades, and 300 would have white skins. Of the one thousand in the village, only 300 would be Christians. Half of the total income of the people in the village would be in the hands of 60 people; over 700 would not be able to read. Over 500 would not have enough to eat or would be eating food which would make them weak or ill. Over 600 would live in sub-standard houses."

THE WAY I HEARD IT

Regarding Glastonbury . . .

I can only tell it to you as I heard it, or if you please, as I read it:

"Many people still believe that under the waters of a spring on the slopes of its Tor, which is topped by a basically 14th century church tower, Joseph of Arimathea buried the chalice used at the Last Supper; that when, on a nearby hill, he thrust his thorn staff into the ground it took root to produce the distinctive Glastonbury winter-flowering thorn-tree; and that, on what was later to be the site of the great abbey round which the town grew, he built a church of daub and wattle and there made the first conversions to Christianity in Britain. This, briefly, is the Legend of Glastonbury; still the cause of pilgrimages."

A STUDY IN RUINS

Glastonbury Abbey is a study in ruins. The remnants set "among noble trees and well kept lawns," recall for the modern-day pilgrim one of the greatest monasteries of medieval England.

The Abbey was dissolved in 1539. Anything and everything of value inside the walls and under the roof were removed. The walls, neglected, stood for 300 years. Then, mark you, they served as a quarry, a huge stone pile, if you please, from which much of the town was built.

Some folks might say regarding the stones—"from a good use to a better." But isn't it dangerous, perhaps unfair, to draw upon comparison? Are not both uses necessary? Each use may have its own particular reason, but that, my friend, is an entirely different matter. Perhaps . . .



514.—The Glastonbury Thoru.

THE WAY I SAW IT

There were six, eight, ten of them: nearer eight than six or ten. There was also a child, held tenderly, carefully. The person holding the child was cooing softly in its ear.

They were all lying on the church lawn . . . the lawn of the parish church in Glastonbury. Two of them—then three of them are with us inside the church. One of them had been playing the organ.

They are young people . . . young adults. Dare say they are all in their twenties; their early twenties.

The girl standing along side of me is wearing, I presume, little more than a simple garment of unbleached muslin. It hangs freely over her body, almost touching her bare feet. Her face is marked crudely with some kind of painted figures.

They are referred to as "hippies." More than one sign on the shops nearby reads as follows: "Hippies will not be served."

I'm troubled, really I am. I like people. I like all kinds of people—young, middle-aged—old. I like people—all kinds of people, really. I like some bad people I know . . . and there are good people I like, too.

But I'm troubled here. I like things I've seen . . .

—young chap playing an organ in church . . . attempting a classic tune, at that

—a baby being held. How did I say it before?—

"tenderly, carefully . . . the person holding it cooing softly in its ear."

—young adults gathering on a church lawn

—the vicar of the parish showing himself friendly to the young people

It isn't what I see that troubles me, honestly. I guess it's what I don't see that bothers me . . . Where is there purpose here? Where is there sense of direction? Where is there responsibility?

I like people. I like people. I suppose we like each other because they are content to let me go my way—but I'm troubled, yes, I am. I'm not content to let them go their way . . .

WHAT THE SIGN SAID

And if my pictures of Glastonbury turn out, there will be one that shows a bronze placque, marking a very special tomb site:

“Site of King Arthur’s Tomb.
In the year 1191 the bodies of King Arthur and his queen were said to have been found on the south side of the Lady Chapel. On 19th April 1278 their remains were removed in the presence of King Edward I and Queen Eleanor to a black marble timb on this site. This tomb served until the dissolution of the Abbey in 1539.”

HOUR AFTER HOUR—KNIGHT AFTER KNIGHT

In the north transept of Wells Cathedral is a remarkable 14th century clock. Standing there at four o'clock one day we heard and saw it strike. Across its face knights joust on the hour. Now, what could this mean or symbolize? Do you suppose the moral here is that every hour of each day there is some foe to be overcome, some enemy to conquer, some battle to win? Could it be that life, as time passes, introduces one new foe after another, or, like the knights who rotate on the face of the cathedral clock, is it the same old one coming back again and again?



983.—Interior of Wells Cathedral.

WORD FOR THE WISE

A water fountain near the north side of the Abbey Church in Bath, Queen City of the west, bears the inscription "Water is best." On the opposite of the fountain are these words: "Placed by the National Temperance Union."

NO SPECIAL LOVE FOR SAINTS

Douglas Wilson is the Assistant Bishop of the Wells Diocese. Writing in the August 1971 issue of the Diocesan News he includes a quotation from J. Austin Baker's "Foolishness of God"—"God does not love His saints more than He does anyone else. The difference is that living constantly in the awareness of Him, they become people in whom He finds more joy and in whom His spirit is more clearly shown. Moreover, He is not more truly present to them than to others; it's just that they are aware of a presence which is the same for all. We are all continually in the immediate presence of God, whether we know it, whether indeed we like it or not. It is this fact which takes us straight into the heart of the matter of prayer—" Not much comfort here for saints, is there? But then saints are those who are past the stage of having to need special consolation . . . that's one reason why they get to be saints, wouldn't you say?

PARISH POSTER

It was, if I recall correctly, on the wall near the entrance to the Tetbury Parish Church that I saw the poster which read—

“Give a man a fish
And you feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish
And you feed him for life.”

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL

It was on the night of Thursday, November 14. The year was 1940. That was the night when Coventry suffered the largest air-raid of any one night on any British city during the second World War. Coventry's 14th century cathedral was not spared. It was destroyed by fire bombs.

* * *

Burnt timbers have been used from the destroyed cathedral to fashion a cross. There are two words which are carved into the reredos, forming the simple background of the stone altar where the charred cross stands amid the ruins. Those two words? The only two possible words that belong there: FATHER FORGIVE.

* * *

Most cathedrals have an east window. In the new Coventry Cathedral there hangs in this traditional place the mighty tapestry, largest in the world. It was woven in France, and took 30,000 hours to make. Unnecessary comment: some folks like the tapestry immediately; one chap said that by looking at it for 30,000 hours he might eventually learn to like it.

Coventry Cathedral is many things. For one—it is the resurgent cathedral. It was meant to rise from the ashes of the old. Then, because of her prior fate, she has become an agent of reconciliation and a witness to unity.

* * *

The Christian religion has always been more than a matter of words. But never sell her words short. Those two words carved into the reredos of the stone altar amid the ruins of the old cathedral—FATHER FORGIVE—were naturally remembered when a small International Centre was established. Mark you, it was opened in January 1960 by Dr. Otto Dibelius, Bishop of Berlin. The furnishings for the Centre were provided by a Berliner who had lost his

entire family in an air raid on his own city. Two years later, sixteen young Germans came to Coventry, worked in the Centre for six months as evidence of the concern of German Christians.

* * *

Coventry has a Chapel of Unity. It is intended that in it and through it concerned Christians of all denominations "could grow together by mutual understanding, common prayer, and joint service in the community." On the fifth anniversary of the destruction of the cathedral, November 14, 1945, a number of responsible people signed the Joint Declaration—

"We, who, belonging to different Christian communions, now set apart this place as a Chapel of Unity for the worship of God, acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour of the whole world. We have already experienced the grace of God through many years of work and prayer together; we believe that He has guided us to establish for His people a Christian Service Centre. We also believe that our undertaking will be in vain unless we seek His guidance, and it is for this purpose that we hallow this Chapel of Unity. We are true, each of us, to the traditions we have inherited, but we have learned to see more clearly the fulness of the one Christ as we have seen Him mirrored in others. Recognizing that there is but one Christ for all peoples and for all times, we seek in the fellowship of this chapel to take our part with the blessed company of all faithful people."

* * *

Coventry Cathedral is not simply a massive structure with a history. She is a mission and a purpose. She is the Gospel made relevant. Her influence is to be felt in many ways in the community. Provost N.C.N. Williams has properly maintained that the greatest single objective of the Ministry of Coventry Cathedral is to establish a creative relationship with the community in which it is set. There are many community structures which the parish system cannot begin remotely to influence. But the cathedral's ministry is being so organized as "to experiment on the

widest possible front to find points of entry into definable community structures and to learn the fundamental principles about human relations of the future."

* * *

The new Coventry Cathedral is geared to vindicate a brave and daring faith. It is expressed in the inscription which is to be found within the floor at the entrance of the nave. It simply and boldly states:

"To the Glory of God
This Cathedral Burnt."



1899.—Coventry Pageant.

STRATEGY OF EVIL

Cuthbert Bardsley is the Bishop of Coventry. I salute him for sentiments which I have long felt but could never express so well as he:

"Let us picture a scene. There is a man sitting alone in the wilderness. All around him is parched earth; great rocks litter the landscape; there is no movement, no sound, only a vast, quivering silence.

In that silence, a voice speaks into the man's thoughts. It is the voice of the devil and he is expressing three classic temptations: the temptation to meet the material needs of men by material means and so thereby to become a popular figure; the temptation to take a short cut and win men's allegiance by sensational means and, the third temptation, to capture the world's allegiance by using worldly power.

Why do I conjure up that scene now? Because the wilderness is a timeless wilderness, that one in which Christ once sat. It is happening, in essence, here and now and all the time as men in their lesser ways face life and its major issues, and ask basic questions about the strategy of their life's work. The voice of evil is a timeless voice. It is at work even now.

The particular form which this strategy of evil takes in our contemporary society is three-fold: first, to call for a change of things, without first calling for a change in the hearts of people; secondly, to tackle the problems of community without first tackling the problems of persons who compromise that community; thirdly, to suppose that, by the manipulation of resources, we can bring about desired human ends.

What worries me is that at this moment of time so many reformers and thinkers are paying too great attention to the shape which the community shall take, and too little attention to the quality of the people who make up the community. What is needed today in this disordered world is not so much changed communities as changed persons.



1268.—Coventry.

DOORS WITHOUT KEYS

We arrive at Langley. It's the manor house, owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. John Spencer. It's in the country. Tonight, as will be true on four other occasions, we'll not be issued keys. We had quite forgotten that it's still possible to trust one another—even strangers on holiday!

SIMPLE ANSWER

John Spencer and I talked of many things that night. He impressed me greatly as a man of strong moral fibre, a man of much integrity. I made bold to ask him how he accounted for such sterling qualities. Recovering from embarrassment, he replied: "it's a matter of upbringing. We deplore a lie, a cheat. We demand respect from our children."

HARDLY WORTH NOTING

Worcester sauce really is made in the ancient Cathedral city of Worcester. The recipe, however, is credited to Sir Marcus Sandys, who had been an early Governor of Bengal. Guess where he really got it!

EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE

Worcester, built on both sides of the Severn River, has always drawn heavily upon the fertility of the surrounding valley. Small wonder then that she frequently victimized by marauding armies of Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Danes and Welsh. And what a price she paid when at the time of the Civil War she was the first city to declare for the King. Cromwell's final battle took place at Worcester when Charles II was completely defeated.

RARE SOUL IN A CATHEDRAL

I liked him instinctively. Bent by the years, the old man was shuffling along toward the north entrance of Chester Cathedral. He spoke first, and graciously offered to show me about. He particularly pointed out the consistory room, where "court" was held and all cases touching upon canon law dealt with; the cloisters and the monks' quarters. Then, shortly thereafter, he begged to take leave. He simply said—"it's time for Matins, and I must be off there to pray."

FROM THE OLD CLOCK

The message from the Old Clock in Chester Cathedral speaks for itself since Time, for the believer, has no meaning apart from Eternal Life in Christ:

“When as a child I laughed
and wept, time crept.

When as a youth I dreamed and
talked, time walked.

When I became a full grown man,
time flew.

Soon I shall find while travelling on,
time gone.

Will Christ have saved my soul
by then?”

A PRAYER

The facts are few. His name: Thomas Henry Basil Webb, only son of Lt. Col. Sir Henry Webb. He was born on August 12, 1898. He was educated at Winchester College. Still in his teens, he went off to the great War. He was killed on the Somme, December 1, 1917. He was only 19 years of age. He must have been a grand chap, a likeable one and remarkable. How do I know? What makes me think so? The facts are few, that's right. But I came to my conclusion as I read the lines he had written. You can check them out in the Refectory at Chester Cathedral and form your own opinion:

"Give me a good digestion, Lord,
And also something to digest;
But when and how that something comes
I leave to Thee, who knowest best.

Give me a healthy body, Lord;
Give me a sense to keep it so;
Also a brave heart that is not bored
Whatever work I have to do.

Give me a healthy mind, Good Lord,
That finds the good that dodges sight;
And, seeing sin, is not appalled,
But seeks a way to put it right.

Give me a point of view, Good Lord,
Let me know what it is, and why,
Don't let me worry overmuch
About the thing that's known as 'I.'

Give me a sense of humor, Lord,
Give me the power to see a joke,
To get some happiness from life
And pass it on to other folk."

TRACT NO. 3231

Somewhere along the line I came across this religious tract. It's published by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. It is quite a piece. It bears the title "What to Say to a Jehovah's Witness."

"I admire your zeal in trying to forward your beliefs. I am sure you are a sincere person. But I cannot accept your literature. You preach a cruel and unreasonable god who is going to sweep most of his children away in a horrible battle of Armageddon while you witnesses stand aside and look on.

I don't believe that you really like to look at such a wicked thing. You are too kind for that. Yet you make out that God is not good and kind. He destroys His own children, not because they are morally bad, but rather because they do not join Jehovah's Witnesses. You would not treat your children like that. So you are better than the god you preach. For ages He has known, according to you, that He was going to have this horrible battle of Armageddon, and yet He has gone on making more children to be destroyed.

I want nothing to do with such a god. If you go on preaching Him, you will get to be like Him, cruel and unreasonable. You witnesses consider this world hopeless, and so you leave it to perish. You make no effort to help the suffering by supporting hospitals, orphanages, or other works of mercy. You take no part in seeing that we have good honest government.

I believe in the true God, the God of love. Not in a strange god of hate. I believe in the Gospel, that means the good news that God loves us and cares for us. I do not believe your message of bad news. I know what the true God is like. Your unreasonable god is not one bit like Jesus who went about doing good, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and Himself died for us on the Cross instead of destroying us. You are too good a person to be a Jehovah's Witness. Be a witness for Jesus and the God of Love. Spread His good news of the gift of eternal life here and hereafter."

ONE MAN'S TRIBUTE

A century ago George Barrow wrote of Snowdon in North Wales . . .

"Perhaps in the whole world there is no region more picturesquely beautiful, a region of mountains and lakes, cataracts and groves, in which nature shows herself in her most grand and beautiful forms."

George, bless your soul, I feel that very same way about certain parts of my native Pennsylvania. Sure wish you could have come that way, too. What language might have rushed forth from your poetic tongue there!

MOUTHFULL

There's a small village in North Wales with a long name. Ready for it? Here it is:

LLANFAIRPWLLGWNGYLLGOGERYCHWYRNDROB-
WLLANDYSILIOGOGOGOGCH. It's all one seemingly
(to us) unprounceable word. No wonder it has
an abbreviation: LLANFAIR, P.G. What does the
56-letter-word mean? The literal translation is
"Church of St. Mary in the hollow of white hazel,
near to a rapid whirlpool and to St. Tysilio's
Church, near to a red cave." Of course! What else?

LITTLE KNOWN FACT

Dolgellau, in North Wales, is also famous for its ancient but rarely worked gold mines. The Queen's wedding ring was made from Welsh gold mined there.

AN INCIDENTAL FACT

There is only one remaining narrow-guage railway in the entire British rail system. You can find it in North Wales. It runs from Aberystwyth to Devil's Bridge. Interested?

ANTIQUE SIGN

I saw it with my own eyes: the sign over the antique shop in an English town which read "DEN OF ANTIQUITY." Clever chap, that one.

AT MY DOOR

Speaking of the hills in North Wales, S. Gwilly Davies once wrote:

'Ni cheisiwn bryffyrdd byd
na thonnau'r mor,

Roedd golud prinauf duw o gylch
by nor;

A chaffwn invau yng ngyni
pob rhyw awr

Hedd yng nghadeonid y
mynddoedd mawr.'

Oh yes, the translation:

"I would not seek the highways of
the world,

Nor voyage on the seas,

God's most precious prize would
be at my door;

Should trouble come my way, I
would find solace in the
strength of the mountains."

HELPFUL HINTS

It was not until I came to Wales that I really learned the meaning of the name of Pennsylvania's lovely town called BRYN MAWR. Figure it out for yourself, as I did, from these notes on Welsh Place-Names:

Aber—river mouth or confluence of rivers

afon—river	llyn—lake
bach—small	mawr—big
bryn—hill	moel—round hill
caer—fort	myndd—mountain
capel—chapel	nant—valley
coed—trees	pen—top
crib—crest	plas—mansion
cwm—valley	pont—bridge
gwyn—white	rhos—moor
	traeth—beach

ON A STREET NAMED HOPE

Here are the words I'll borrow as Liverpool's two cathedrals are introduced—

"High on a sandstone ridge, at one end of a street named Hope, Liverpool men have been toiling for over sixty years to build the biggest Anglican Cathedral in Britain and one of the six largest cathedrals in the world. Half a mile away at the other end of the same street, a second cathedral—the Roman Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ The King—was consecrated on Whitsunday, 1967. Thus, Liverpool, hard-as-nails Liverpool, bold-as-brass Liverpool, demonstrated to the world that beneath its tough exterior there beats a God-respecting heart. Liverpool will in the future be known throughout the world as the City of the Cathedrals and even will look back in wonder at this twentieth century when men had the vision to build two such great manifestations of their faith."

A BOLD STROKE

The new Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool is not only the world's newest but also the fastest built ever. In building time it took less than four and a half years. But it was a span of 115 years, mark you, that separated the conception from the birth.

* * *

It is a bold stroke. So great is the departure from the orthodox that any number of people, perhaps the majority at first, "nurtured a faint uncomfortable suspicion that it was not quite right to build a church like this, as though it might offend the aesthetic taste of God."

The criticism has now thinned out. And the vast concrete cone of a cathedral with its vast pillarless arena may at first give the visitor an almost strange, eerie-like experience, eventually "begets a feeling of humility in the worshipper and a proper sense of respect in the sight-seer."

* * *

Many minds were challenged as three hundred entries were received from architects all over the world. The winning design was submitted by Sir Frederick Gibberd.

* * *

One of the stipulations laid down at the beginning was that the congregation should be in full sight of the altar. This implied immediately to Gibberd that the building should be in the round. Inspired, his first doodle on the back of an envelope showed something of what he had in mind!

* * *

The cathedral had a crown of glass. Simple facts: the cathedral has more glass than any cathedral in the world, including Chartres. The sixteen-sided lantern has 156 panels and contains some 25,000 square feet of one-inch thick glass weighing 500 tons in 300 shades. The total weight of the great lantern, an enormous "filigree" of concrete and inch-thick glass is nearly a thousand tons!

* * *

PATERNAL PRIDE

Near noon that day when we visited Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King we were drawn to the chapel where a priest was conducting mass in the vernacular. On the wall above the altar there was an original painting. It was done in much the same manner and mood as Jon had done in the pieces that he painted for the Luther Room in Saint Luke Church! I walked away and gave thanks to God, giver of all talent.

* * *

Near the entrance door in the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, biggest in Britain and one of the half-dozen largest in the world, we read the notices on the bulletin board. There was one with telephone numbers in large letters—709-8888 or 709-2212. They, either one of them, numbers to ring and someone to listen. It's the crisis intervention telephoning ministry of The Samaritans. I thought gratefully (that's the word) of David and the Somebody Cares program—588-5440—which he introduced as part of the comprehensive youth ministry outreach through Saint Luke Church.

Cardinal John Heeran preached the sermon on that memorable day, Sunday, May 14, 1967. Of the architect he said: "I congratulate the architect on the excellence of his design. He spoke in a new language, but has not used any tricks which would embarrass those who will come later. This is authentic art, and it will be admired so long as men cherish beauty." Concerning the question, asked many times, dealing with the justification of expenditures on a cathedral of this size in an age of starving millions, he gave this answer: "Never in the history of Christendom has the time been ripe for building a cathedral. This has always been the expression of the faith and love of Christian people. Cathedrals are not usually built by rich men. They are built by the self-denial of the poor. This glory of glass and the Crown of Christ the King above us will be paid for by humble people rejoicing that by God's grace they have some share in this superb tribute to our Lord."

Thank you, reverend sir. What you have said, you have said well and wisely so.

MINISTRY BY THE UNSHOCKABLE WHO ARE COMPASSIONATE

The descriptive folder does two things. First it invites people to call a certain number in their time of great need. Second, it enlists people who will serve as listeners to those who might call 709-8888 or 709-2212 when the burden of life becomes seemingly unbearable.

Here's the way the latter reads:

"The Samaritans would help you. Will you help the Samaritans? People are needed who are sympathetic, unshakable and caring. Men and women from all walks of life, of any religion or none. Volunteers are needed to do telephone duty and to befriend those in distress or despair. All you need to bring to the Samaritans is your humanity, commonsense, and personal concern."

The former is also descriptive of the ministry of the Samaritans and the justification of its existence:

"Each week more than three people commit suicide in the area covered by the Liverpool Branch of the Samaritans and it is probably that two of them gave some prior indication of their intention. The greatest single cause of suicide is depression and the greatest single cause of depression is loneliness.

Who are the lonely; isolated; suicidal? The ones who feel alone when you are sitting beside them; the worriers; those who feel that the world is against them; those lonely in a crowd; the sick; the bereaved; those hard hit by calamity or sudden shock with no one to turn to in their difficulties; not only the neurotic and mentally ill but ordinary people beset by extraordinary circumstances;

'Suicide is not a disease, a crime or a sin but a symptom of many different problems,' said a coroner recently; between five and six thousand people take their own lives in the United Kingdom each year and ten times that number attempt suicide; they have one thing in common—loneliness.

There is a Number to Ring and Someone to Listen. The Liverpool number is 709-8888 and those who listen are the Samaritans, ordinary lay people from all walks of life. There are 150 members in the Liverpool Branch which is one of over 100 in the nation-wide organization which in turn is part of a world-wide network.

The Samaritans don't claim to do anything that could not be done by any other agency except make themselves available night and day. They listen and offer understanding friendship, they let people talk over their problems, whatever they are, in complete confidence. They don't give advice but if the caller wants expert help the Samaritans can put them in touch with an expert. They do not try to do what can be done much better by someone else.

They know how to listen, they understand loneliness and they demand nothing."

It's that closing statement—"they demand nothing." Guess I know what they're trying to put over when they evaluate their ministry that way. But I sure wish these programs were in a position to sometimes "speak" as well as "listen" to the caller's condition. I've had my share of counselling sessions where the chap in front of me needed a great deal more of me than a listening post. There were certain things that he needed to have said to him—honestly, now. What good is a visit to the physician if there's no diagnosis offered, no treatment recommended? if it's only the patient reciting his ills, real or imaginary?

LIKE DELICATE THREADS

I know what they say about the Anglican Cathedral
in Liverpool:

“one of the great buildings of the world”;

“first cathedral to be built in the
Northern Province since the Reformation”;

“the largest Gothic arches ever built”;

“finest cathedral organ in the world.”

I like it best for its windows. They're like long
slender threads of delicate color.

BRIEF EPISODE

We saw him only once and briefly. It was long enough. And now I'm glad that in that fraction of a minute I was too slow to get his picture through the windshield of our car. He was crossing the busy Liverpool thorough-fare as we approached the intersection. He was one-legged. Not realizing that we were slowing for him, expecting that we might recklessly treat him as undoubtedly others have done, he fairly snarled and shot out his tongue, adder-like. There was a fierce look in his eyes. Handicapped, he was broken, beaten and bitter. I dare not fault him. But what good came of his hostility to us for whom he has no name, no memory? And, pray tell, what good comes from my recalling the incident? of sharing it with you? Yet this passing scene, which is part of the parade of life, must be recorded. And always we must make the necessary allowance for him and his kind—the battered and the bruised . . . and . . . the bitter.

LAKE COUNTRY

We enter the Lake Country and we are moved to silent appreciation of its beauty, peace, calm.

STRANGE SOUNDS

Below our window at Michael's Nook (that's the name for our delightful country-house on the edge of Grasmere) I hear strange sounds. Sheep are grazing in the meadow below. They are grazing safely. And why not? Isn't this the house where Wordsworth's shepherd lad, Michael, was born and lived?



1703.—Gey's Cliff in the 17th Century.

SOMETHING TO LIVE UP TO

A man by the name of Gifford owns and operates, among other things, Michael's Nook, one of Grasmere's country-houses. A framed sign indicates that Holiday Magazine has declared it one of Britain's finest. Gifford's staff insist, once they had learned of the award, that it be displayed. Until it arrived, none of them knew anything at all that such "an inspection, survey, assessment or judgment" had been made. It was agreed that the impressive designation would be framed and appropriately displayed. But, according to Gifford, there would be an understanding from the very beginning; now more than ever, with the award on display, the high quality of service would have to be maintained. They would constantly have to prove themselves worthy of such designation.

Sure wish this basic principle would become operative in all of us who wear the sign of the Cross, who are marked by the Sign of the Cross at the time of our baptism. The world does have a right to expect us "to measure up," especially when we make any display of our religion.

“LIKE LEAFLESS UNDERBOUGHS”

The parish church in Grasmere is named for Saint Oswald, the Northumbrian king and champion of Christianity who was killed in battle with Perda, the heathen king of Mercia, in 642. The church goes back to the 13th century. It is characterized by the unique construction of a supporting wall straight down the centre of the Nave. Wordsworth once described this church he loved with these words—

“Not raised in nice proportion
was the pile,
But large and massy;
For duration built;
With pillars crowded, and the
roof upheld
By naked rafters intricately crossed,
Like leafless underboughs in some
thick wood.
All withered by the depth of shade
above.”

WHAT HEAVEN REJECTS

The rector of the Grasmere Church, much as all men of God must do, had written a letter to the parish constituency, encouraging them to give gladly and freely to the maintenance and preservation of the church. The letter was posted in a conspicuous place within the church. Bless his soul, he had enlisted the eloquence of the poet to assist him in his plea as he quoted Wordsworth:

"Give all thou canst; High
heaven rejects the lore
of nicely calculated less
or more."

Magnificently put. God loves a cheerful giver—and "reckless," too! What joy is there in cool calculation before the Lord's altar? Perish the thought.

"TO LIFT UP TO HOLY THINGS"

The curse of our day lies in the fact that so few of us become inspired by others. When did you last meet someone who lifted your heart to holy thoughts? Nor do we ourselves discharge this sacred obligation as we touch the lives of those who come our way.

Not far from the communion rail, on one of the pillars in the Grasmere Church, there is a tablet. It has been placed by the friends and neighbors of William Wordsworth, who remembered him beautifully. This is the way their tribute "To The Memory of William Wordsworth" reads—

"A true philosopher and poet,
Who, by the special gift and calling
of Almighty God,
Whether he discoursed on man or nature,
Failed not to lift up the heart to holy things,
Tired not of maintaining the cause
of the poor and the simple;
And so, in perilous times, was raised up
to be a chief minister, not only of noblest
posey, but of high and sacred truths.

WILLIAM AND MARY

Wordsworth and his wife are buried in the church yard in Grasmere. The tablet over the grave simply reads:

“William Wordsworth
1850

Mary Wordsworth
1859”

BISHOP'S COMMENT

The Anglican bishop of the Carlisle Diocese is quite exercised over the "most burning issue of the century," as he has expressed it. He devotes his opening paragraph in his July 1971 message through the Diocesan News to the matter of population explosion. While he recognizes what has been done in recent years to feed the hungry people in the under-developed and in the over-populated countries of the world, he views it all as being self-defeating unless there is action just as vigorous to control population growth. He believes that the day that the English clergyman, Thomas Malthus, had in mind way back in 1798 is just around the corner: the day when there would not be enough food to feed the human family. He concludes his article by raising the question: "If, in primeval times, God said to man: 'be fruitful and multiply,' is He now saying 'Be sensible and stop'?"

STILL ANOTHER COMMENT BY THE BISHOP

He titled it "a word out of season." Bless your soul, Bishop! Your grace speaks handsomely, precisely, properly. Even though I've never met you (sure wish I could one day!) let me share your words with any reader of mine who might have this page before him. After all, I've already taken the liberty of introducing you and your sentiments in the paragraphs immediately preceding. So—here goes—and without further comment:

"The London magistrate who ruled that a certain four letter word is not obscene was, in effect, encouraging its general use. I could wish that had said otherwise and prevented the defendant, suffering from an impoverished vocabulary, with an English dictionary in which he could find words strong enough to express any and every human emotion from elation to disgust, and from compassion to contempt. As it was, he sent him on his way with a license to pollute the stream of life with foul language.

The magistrate's ruling was not the most alarming or earth-shaking thing which has happened in a court of law in recent years, but it betrays a trend which the majority of people will find repulsive. We seem to be living in an age when dirty words become whiter than white and when the only unmentionable four-letter words are words which restrict license—like "duty" and "obey." To be frank, I am far more concerned by the devaluation of words like "love," "integrity," "freedom," "discipline," "punishment," "obedience" and "duty," than I am about a few people with a diminished vocabulary. These are words which at their highest make the stream of life flow so strongly that it takes more than the indiscretion of ignorance of a few to pollute it."

Pardon me, Your Grace. I said I'd offer no further comment. Please let me have one word yet . . . please. I must say to you, good Bishop, "Bravo"!

WHEN TO DESCRIBE IS NOT TO EXPLAIN

We stopped in a Scottish town for lunch, enroute to Edinburgh. The people, local folk at the next table, are friendly, talkative. They mention the forthcoming celebration in the town—a week come Saturday. It's the "Common Riding" event. We ask them to explain this tradition which the entire community now anticipates. They describe it in detail, but are somewhat at a loss to explain the event or the occasion it commemorates.

And that's the way many deal with our holidays—be it Christmas or Fourth of July. Concerning the latter—we'll take the day off alright—watch the fire-works—may even buy sparklers for the young'uns. But who reads them the Declaration of Independence? Who reads the scriptural account of the magi bearing gifts before the first package is opened from under the Christmas tree on Christmas day in the morning?

LOUD AND CLEAR

In the foyer of the Hotel Gleneagles I saw a teen-ager; American, no doubt. He was wearing an orange colored tee shirt. The back of it was emblazoned with these words—"I'm becoming allergic to criticism."

DAVID MOORBY

We trusted him instinctively. He's an antique dealer in that delightful Scottish town called Auchterader. Incidentally, he trusted us, too. And it's this sort of thing that makes life worth living, wouldn't you say?

MORE ABOUT DAVID MOORBY

He likes beautiful things, and his shop is not over-stocked. What he has is also tastefully, artistically arranged. He has a little work-room at the rear of his shop where he personally works with a restorative or freshening touch on this item or that. Like to think you can trust a chap who likes beautiful things—who limits his stock so he has time to tinker a bit himself with the precious pieces. Forgot to say—David Moorby says his first love is people—especially those who have an eye for lovely things. He's that kind of chap, you see.

HEATHER

On our way to Inverness we see isolated patches of heather just coming into bloom. We can readily imagine how beautiful it must look when it covers the land.

IDENTIFICATION

When it came time for the prayer of the church, the preacher in the Scottish Cathedral in Inverness walked away from the chancel, a full 2/3 length of the Nave, where he offered prayer in our behalf to Almighty God. Impressive. So I remember it having been done that way in St. Martin-in-The-Fields, London. Here now was no isolated soul, no matter how holy, reciting a prayer before an altar at the far end of the church, remotely set apart from the people whom he's sent to represent!

AND STIRKS

Waiting those 50 minutes for the ferry to take us to the hotel in Ballachulish, I while away the time talking with those folks on holiday from Southampton. I also spend some time pondering the rate list for the ferry as it is posted on the nearby ticket shed. The listing provides rates for cars, trailers, 3 wheeled vehicles, cycles, cows, horses, two year olds and stirks. Never succeeded in figuring out whether "two year olds" referred to animals or humans. Really didn't bother me too much since we had neither infants or horses and cows along with us. But those stirks—wonder what they are . . .

GOOD PHYSICIAN

It happened so naturally as we sat in the lounge in Ballachulish. We were drawn that easily into one another's conversations. He and his family are on holiday from Broughton Astley, Leicestershire, England. He is a general practitioner. When I asked him what took him into medicine, he replied simply, "I like people and I want to help them." His name is Dr. Dean Orton. He spelled the lie to the notion that I've had on occasion that under socialized medicine the personal relationship between physician and patient disappears. He assured me that he has some personal knowledge of everyone of the 3,000 people who have registered with him as patients!

SIX OF A KIND

They sat at the table opposite us in that hotel in Edinburgh. They were two sets of parents with a child per couple . . . Americans all. No doubt they are good people, honest, kind, and honorable. But they are loud . . .

THE FUTURE COMETH

Driving along the country-side, rural-bred Winifred didn't miss a thing. She named the crops; she recognized the livestock. Today it was the fresh cut furrows for a comprehensive program of re-forestation. Tomorrow comes. Scotland's getting ready. She's planting trees!



1636.—St. Giles's and the Old Tron Church, Edinburgh, in the time of Charles I.
(From an old Print.)

BORN IN EDINBURGH

In Edinburgh's storied St. Giles Cathedral there is a commemorative tablet for Robert Louis Stevenson, novelist and poet of world-wide reputation. He was born in Edinburgh in 1850. He died in Samoa forty-four years later. The tablet shows him in a semi-reclining position. The words of a prayer he had composed are inscribed on the great marker. Not having any paper along with me, I failed to note the words of that prayer. Sure hope I come across them one day. The sentiment expressed, as I recall it, was sublime.

WHO NEITHER FEARED NOR FLATTERED

Quite properly, we can't think of Edinburgh's St. Giles Cathedral without thinking of John Knox, brave and bold preacher. When he died someone said of him, "here lies one who neither feared nor flattered any flesh." Mary, Queen of Scots, is supposed to have said that she feared the prayers of John Knox more than all the armies of Europe!

A CITY IN ITS 1900th YEAR

Tracing its history back to the year A.D. 71 when the Romans first built a fort there, the city of York is more medieval than any other English town.

The chief glory of the town is the Minster. It was built between 1220 and 1470. The present structure, now undergoing extensive repairs intended to make it last another 2,000 years, is at least the fourth church to be erected on that site.

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

Third largest in the land, it is to be remembered for many reasons. For the moment let this alone suffice: it houses the finest of four contemporary copies of the Magna Carta which are still extant.

And why shouldn't God's House be associated with those things that give civil guarantee to the dignity of man's rights? Who would dare to fault me for passing by so many other things in order to give signal attention to the document of Runnymede?

A BRIDGE AND FIVE PENCE

To whom it may concern—in all our month's long touring about England, Wales and Scotland we drive over only one toll bridge. Fare: five pence.

PULPIT GIANTS

In Cambridge we visit the Great Saint Mary's Church. Some of the greatest preachers of the land have preached from its pulpit. A few of them have been executed by the rulers of the land.

Time after time, in parish church or lofty cathedral there is that corded velvet rope that denies access to the pulpit by the ordinary person. Could it be more than a verger's control measure? What if it signified that only certain ones—the brave and the bold—the willing-to-die-for-their-convictions—were alone fit to go there? What if . . .

AMERICAN CEMETERY

Cambridge is to be remembered for many things. Americans do well to include in the list the largest and most beautiful resting-place in England of those Americans who gave their lives for freedom—1941-1946.



662.—Ely Cathedral.

ELY CATHEDRAL

Small city, big cathedral: that's Ely, some 16 miles north of Cambridge. The chairs have been entirely removed, and we are at once impressed with the beauty and the grandeur of this holy place. The ceiling is still colorfully decorated, although subdued by age. The octagon tower is awe-inspiring. All cathedrals we have visited have left their indelible mark upon us. But Ely has a particular charm all its own. Could it be due to that tone in Dr. Fritz Kaufmann's voice when he first spoke to me of Ely, some twenty years ago? Did it at that moment find a special spot in my heart—although yet to be visited?

LONDON RE-VISITED

After a three weeks' stint in the country, we find the teeming metropolis less and less attractive. Of course, there's much to see—much to do—but all those people. Could be they feel the same way about us? After awhile—the stacks of luggage, the arrival of coach load after coach load of tourists, the confusion of tongues—the die is cast. We make plans to go back to the country . . . winding, narrow lanes, simple fare, quiet . . . sheep grazing in the meadow.

THIS, TOO, IS LONDON

It's a grocery store, Fortnum and Mason,
with red wall-to-wall carpeting and where
the clerks are all decked out in frock coats
and striped trousers!

RESURGAM

The Great Fire of London in 1666 spared no mercy. The great cathedral named for Saint Paul (one-time tent mender and wandering Gospel preacher, theologian and church founder, letter writer) was severely damaged. The decision had been made: build anew on the same site. The old gave way to the new. The ancient ram-rod method was used: the persistent pounding at one spot until the vibrations weaken the entire section and the remaining wall comes crumbling down. One day as the workmen were rummaging among the mass of ruins, they came upon one stone in particular. It had been one of the original, placed in the cathedral years upon years earlier. It had only one word carved into it—one Latin word: RESURGAM—"I shall arise." So the new cathedral, master-minded by Christopher Wren, arose out of the old. One more incidental reference to the eternal truth of the Christian religion!

* * *

The cathedral, St. Paul's in London, is truly magnificent. For over 1300 years the worship of God has been offered on this site where Christopher Wren's masterpiece, as well as being a cathedral and national monument, is an "enduring symbol of mankind's aspiration for something beyond the limits of his own time or achievement."

* * *

It is not legend, but fact. Decreed cathedral architect Wren that if any workman was found using profane language, he would be summarily dismissed!

* * *

The inscription tablet in Saint Paul's Cathedral includes this sentiment in reference to the architect: "if you seek his monument, look about you" . . .

RASCAL AT LARGE

She's still the demure one, and a grandmother twice over, too. But he hardly surmised that, and if he did, it was no deterrent to him. Cleverly he introduced himself: a tour director. He unburdened his heart—problems; people; problems; people. And all this in less than five minutes until he offered her a souvenir! He had traveled widely and collected much. Would she care for his gift?

Seated there in the hotel lobby, keeping a constant vigil over her luggage, and within earshot of any number of other people—it all seemed so innocent. A souvenir? Yes, thank you," she answered. But the rascal—didn't reach for his case in the lobby and openly hand a gift to her. Not this chap. His room, he informs her, is number 218. Would she meet him there where he could give the present? He didn't wait for an answer as he headed for the elevator. A half-hour later, he re-appeared, the frustrated one. "You didn't come," said the rascal. Her one-worded reply with eyes that never again fell on his: "No." And that was that.

HOW CAPLE, HERFORDSHIRE

They told us the village has a population of about 100. We've seen only three houses and the post office. The others must be tucked away on the occasional narrow hedge-lined lanes that duck off here and there from the main road that leads past How Caple Grange Hotel to the equally small village of Fown Hope.

How Caple will always be endeared to us by the Jones Family—Colin, the father; Hazel, the mother; Alison, Christopher and Carolyn, the three children. Doris was the wife of the nearby disabled veteran who served us our meals and likewise won a spot in our hearts.

THE PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT MARY,
FOWN HOPE,
HERFORDSHIRE

The vicar preached a good sermon

* * *

One of the men who sang in the choir has sung regularly since 1904.

* * *

The first recorded name of the village of Fownhope was simply "Hope," according to the Domesday Book. In the Domesday survey it means a place, a settlement, village or hamlet under the side of a hill.

The suggestion has been made that Fownhope could come from the old English "fana" meaning a "flag" or "the place of the flag." From the Norman church tower waved the flag of William of Normandy.

* * *

The Tower, built between 1100-1150 in the centre of the church is entirely Norman. In the late 14th century the present octagonal spire was erected.

The spire is covered with 22,000 oak shingles.

* * *

The bells in the tower are six in number. The tenor bell bears the words: "I to the church the living call, and to the grave do summon all."

* * *

Scarcely noticed because of the overgrowth are the remains of The Stocks outside the churchyard wall along the main road, nearby the lychgate. They were used at one time for whipping. The records have it that they were last used for a man named Winter, found guilty of drunkenness. Whipping was forbidden by statute in 1791.

"AND FIFTY SIX YARDS AWAY

The milestone by the flagstaff in the churchyard of the Parish Church of Saint Mary reads precisely: "6 1/4 miles and 56 yards from Hereford." The English are precise, to say the least. Musing, it occurred to me how helpful if all life's milestones could be that specific. If everyone could know just far or near he actually was from some impending doom or good fortune yet to be bestowed? Would it really make a difference to a man if he knew at a given point in time that he was within a 1/4 mile of Hell? a 1/2 mile of Heaven? Would it make a difference to know something as specifically as that . . .

"REMEMBER US - - - "

The parish church placed a memorial tablet by the lychgate, honoring her sons who died in the last war. Carved into words, the words spoke eloquently: "Ye that live on mid English pastures green, Remember us and think what might have been."

A.D. 676

Hereford Cathedral, one of the oldest
in England, goes back to A.D. 676.



1002.—Hereford Cathedral.

MAPPA MUNDI

The Cathedral at Hereford houses the famous map of the world. It represents the world as the Middle Ages conceived it, and the designer of it was a canon of Hereford in 1305. The world is a perfect circle with Jerusalem as the centre. Asia is above, Europe and Africa below, England and Wales are on the lower side to the left. The Garden of Eden is marked by an apple tree with Adam and Eve beneath it. Less known regions are inhabited by unicorns, vampires and other fabulous creatures. Why, why is man, I ask you, inclined to picturing the unknown in dreaded and fearful terms?

AND HONESTY RARER

In the Middle Ages and long after the Renaissance, books were rare and honesty rarer! Therefore, in the great centres of learning, in monasteries and cathedrals, books were secured by chains. The practice continued until after 1750. Only at Hereford Cathedral can there be seen a library of this kind with the books still chained and with all the fittings, bookcases, desks, seats, ironwork complete. The chained books number 1,440.

A PAIR OF GRAVESTONES

Not far from the main altar, the visitor to the Cathedral in Hereford, properly referred to as the Church of S.S. Mary and Ethelbert, is captivated by a unique pair of gravestones. A plaque on the wall reads as follows: "On the floor are the gravestones of Herbert Croft and George Benson. Herbert Croft was Dean of the Cathedral, and later became Bishop of the Diocese. He died in 1691. His successor as Dean was George Benson. Their great friendship is remembered by the clasped hands joining the two grave stones together, also the Latin inscription: "in vita conjuncti; in morte non divisi." Being translated it means, as you know, "in life united, in death undivided." A beautiful tribute, indeed. What a pity that any number of clergymen in the roles of predecessor and successor find such a relationship impossible!

YET SOMETHING LESS THAN A BISHOP

At the left facing the altar in Hereford Cathedral is the grave designation: "Giles de Braose, Bishop 1200-1215. An able administrator, a builder, and an intriguer, and a bitter and stubborn adversary of King John." That's what it all said—"and an intriguer." Honest folks, these grave markers. Very honest - - - .

ONE OF THREE

How Caple isn't a very large place. Could be that the population of this English village in Herefordshire doesn't exceed a hundred. There's a parish church, of course. Folks 'round about still speak with respect and affection for their vicar who died a short while ago, in his 82nd year, after some two decades of devoted ministry to his flock. He had been an able rector in a big city parish, and preferred an assignment under a rural dean. Said the Reverend Mr. Jones, vicar in a neighboring parish, as he spoke of the esteemed person: "he had threee earned doctorates: one in law, one in philosophy, one in theology. Of the three in his class who took the examination, one became a distinguished Bishop, another became the Archbishop of Canterbury and the third became the beloved vicar of How Caple" . . . So I muse and think to myself, I do, who would want greater distinction than that: the responsibility of a hundred souls in a tiny village in a quiet spot? Enough, and more than enough indeed, for whom to be responsible in the Day of Judgment . . .

VILLAGE PREACHER

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) has pictured him as so many actually knew him—and those blessed enough to be like him. Surely, it could be that vicar of How Caple parish was of such stuff—and happy indeed that people whose preacher takes Goldsmith's parson as his model:—

“Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden-flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change,
his place;
Unpracticed he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
For other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train;
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and his his claims allowed;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by the fire, and talked the night away,
Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched
was his pride,
and e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;

And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged off-spring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to bright worlds, and led the way.
Beside the bed where parting life was laid
And sorrow, guilt, and pains by turns dismayed,
The reverent champion stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.
At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
Even children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown to share the good man's smile.
His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed;
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

SADLY SAID

The old vicar of How Caple, when asked why there should be so much unrest and so little peace among nations in a troubled world said sadly: "Two hundred years ago the parish that I now serve was joined by another congregation. In the course of these two centuries certain divisions have continued to this day. The two congregations show a measure of respect and regard for each other, but that's about all. The breach has not been totally bridged. If Christians for 200 years can be so confounded, what can one expect from the world?" And that's exactly, so I'm told, the way the old vicar said it: said it sadly.

A BRAVE AND BOLD THING TO DO

The vicar of Fownhope also serves Brockhampton. Both are tiny villages on the way between Ross-on-Wye and Hereford. With sixteen years in the ordained ministry, he has plenty of zip and daring. In one of the three parishes he serves (I only remember the names of two: Fownhope and Brockhampton), only six people attend with marked regularity. At Brockhampton, until he changed the hour of worship (a brave and bold thing to do!) there were only six—the same six, Sunday by Sunday. Now there are fourteen!

"SUNDAY BREAK": SURPRISE

Before coming to Fownhope, the vicar was an army chaplain. (or was it the Air Force?) He proved to be quite an innovator. At his last post, he introduced "Sunday Break." It was the way he dubbed the folk musical service which was scheduled at an hour when the men had "time on their hands." He was overwhelmed by the response; hundreds attended, fascinated by the guitars, the singers, the folk music. Yet when a poll was taken, a majority of the men indicated a preference for the "old hymns" and passed by a number of the contemporary tunes! Surprise - - - .

TO EACH HIS NICHE

Still in his twenties, and she barely so, together they caught my fancy as they talked with the vicar at the close of Morning Prayer that quiet first Sunday in August. What I learned about him could be of some interest to anyone who reads over my shoulder. His parents, brothers and sisters, are highly gifted and doubly blessed as sensitive souls. He is no exception. Having completed his university work, his master's degree is within reach. But he is frustrated. Then there was that day when he saw a medieval instrument restorer at work. He was absolutely fascinated. Charmed by the older man who so deftly directed his fingers to the task at hand, the frustrated music scholar implored him for the chance to try his hand. Wisely the master crafter lets him turn out a key to fit a 17th century clarinet case. The young chap does it superbly. He's found his niche, and will probably have difficulty eking out a living. But what is that so long as one can be fulfilled—and that's what it means to find one's niche - - - .

A PROMISE IS A PROMISE

Alison Jones and her brother Christopher invaded my privacy (not that I was in the least bit unco-operative in their endeavor) one day as I was reading, writing, reflecting or rather: reading, reflecting, writing—that's the proper order. They carried with them, as I put my pad, pencil and books aside, their collection of joke books. So the time was spent with two perfectly delightful youngsters: "Have you heard this one?" - - - "Here's a funny one" - - - "Wait until you hear this one" - - - and all the while in a great capital city of the world some 100 miles away the problems of the nations were being pondered by the perplexed. I'm glad they, the honorable men of Parliament, were where they were, doing what they were doing. I'm equally glad that we were where we were, doing what we were doing.

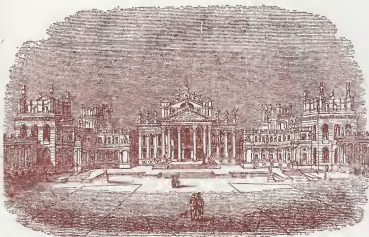
The day we left How Caple they promised to send me some jokes—by air mail, no less. Bless their souls! The world belongs to them and their kind, and I'm not at all displeased to see it come one day into the hands of those who know what it was in the time of their youth to laugh - - - .



413.—Woodstock.

FOR EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK

Woodstock is a fascinating old country town less than ten miles north of Oxford. There the church bells have a different chime for every day of the week. Goodness gracious: who knows when this gem will turn up as an illustration in some preacher's sermon, somewhere, sometime: a different chime, mark you, for every day of the week . . .



3212.—Blenheim House, Woodstock.

SIMPLE INSCRIPTION

Close by Woodstock, on the south side of Blenheim Park that is, one comes upon the village called Bladon. In January, 1965, England's distinguished warrior-statesman and one of the truly great men of the century, was buried there in the churchyard. The plain slab over the grave bears a simple inscription:

"Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill
1874-1965"

EGGS FOR SALE

There's a sign in Blenheim Palace: "Eggs For Sale." Honestly, there is. It's just outside the chapel door at that - - - by the passage-way from the enclosed corridor that leads to the Palace Garden.

FAREWELL TO LONDON

The day we left London, *The Guardian* in its Friday, August 6, 1971 issue (the day we left London, let me repeat) included the following front-page item:

"London, which this month has more foreign visitors than ever before, experienced its first 'tourist jam' yesterday, when so many of them thronged the streets near Piccadilly Circus that it was taking motorists half-an-hour to travel 200 yards, and scores of cars broke down through overheating."

OVERHEARD

Don M. Larrimore, writing from Rome in his special dispatch to the *Washington Post* (issue of Thursday, August 19, 1971) quotes complaining Richard White, a medical student at Case Western Reserve, Cleveland, Ohio: "the trouble with Europe is that it's almost impossible to avoid Americans." That had been the story for White through Britain, Denmark, Holland, France, Spain, Switzerland and Germany. He had done his stint in Europe, mark you, on a four dollar daily budget! But fancy bumping into Americans on a living scale like that!

FINAL WORD

The unforgettable remains—low-lying, white fleecy clouds; narrow, very narrow, winding country lanes, lined tall by close-hugging hedgerows; the church tower or spire, sentinel-like, amid the guardian trees; the Saturday silence broken near candle-time by the hour-long ringing of the storied and sacred bells; the stone or brick cottage with thatched roof; two growing ones—a lad and a lassie—a-laughing; a man with his mate of forty years matching the peace of a garden at sunset-hour with the soul's inner quiet; sheep in the meadow; the road-side gate.

Small wonder,

I say to myself, I really do, that I should think anew and at last of what Michael Fairless once wrote in "The Roadmender" as he thought of a way-side gate along an English country lane - - -

"All day long I sit by the roadside on a stretch of grass under a high hedge of saplings and a tangle of travellers' joy, woodbine, sweetbriar, and late roses. Opposite me is a white gate, seldom used, if one may judge from the trail of honeysuckle growing tranquilly along it. I know now that whenever and wherever I die my soul will pass out through this white gate, and then, thank God, I shall not have to undo the trail . . .

"Now it is a strangely uneventful road that leads to my White Gate. Each day questions me as it passes, each day makes answer for me 'not yet.' There is no material preparation to be made for this journey of mine into a far country—a simple fact which adds to the 'unknowalleness' of the other side. Do I travel alone, or am I one of a great company, swift yet unhurried in their passage? Maybe silence commends itself as most suitable for the wayfarers towards the sunrise—silence because they seek the Word—but for those hastening towards the confusion they have wrought there falls already the sharp oncoming of the curse.

"The gloomy portal when we reach it it but a white gate, the White Gate maybe we have known all our lives barred by the tendrils of the woodbine. But beyond the white and the trail of woodbine falls the silence greater than speech, darkness greater than light, a pause of 'a little while,' and then the touch of the healing garment as we pass to the King in His beauty, in a land from which there is no return, at the gateway then I cry you farewell . . ."



ADVICE TO THE TRAVELER

Ethel's family had given her an especially chosen bon voyage card. The sentiment, well put, reads in part:

"Travel expectantly. Every place you visit is like a surprise package to be opened. Untie the strings with an expectation of high adventure. Travel with curiosity. It is not how far you go, but how deeply you go that mines the gold of experience.

Travel with imagination. As the old Spanish proverb puts it: 'He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the wealth of the Indies with him'."

BBC-2 ANNOUNCEMENT

On the evening of July 27, 1971 the BBC-2 television programme on ecology was introduced with these words: "Owing to renewal of interest, tomorrow may not be cancelled after all."

Acknowledgment

The good people of Saint Luke
congregation, Silver Spring, Maryland,
made the trip possible for both
Winifred and me. A treasured
friend has paid the entire printer's
bill. Another kind soul has
loaned the antique volumes from
which the engravings of old England
have been taken. My gratitude is great.
R. S.

